

LIFETIME ACHIEVER: SARAH BORDERS

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LEGAL AWARDS

PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE



Sarah Borders, a partner with King & Spalding in Atlanta, was honored for a career that started with a Fifth Circuit clerkship, continued when she was hired at the firm in 1989 and ended when she retired in December.

“During her storied legal career, Sarah Borders developed one of the leading restructuring and finance practices in the Southeast and served as a strong leader for King & Spalding,” accord-

ing to her nominator essay. “She did this while devoting significant time to the education and development of other lawyers and to serving the Atlanta community. ... At King & Spalding, Sarah built a stellar career, becoming a nationally recognized restructuring and finance lawyer. She successfully represented many debtors in Chapter 11 cases nationwide.”

The Daily Report asked Borders the following questions:

What inspired you to become a lawyer, and what would you credit with maintaining that inspiration?

I was a competitive public speaker in high school and because I could advocate, I was encouraged to go to law school. I don’t think I fully understood what it meant to be a lawyer until I clerked for Judge Politz on the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. The breadth and gravity of the matters before the court, the

talented lawyers and judges were awe-inspiring. I wanted to be one of those talented lawyers. In all the time that I practiced, I never lost that desire. I was constantly learning new things, and always challenged by the skill and strength of those around me and the gravity and complexity of our client's problems.

Please describe work on a case or issue that has made you proud to be a lawyer during the past year.

A highlight of my career was representing Sea Island Co. in the sale and restructuring of its businesses during the great financial crisis. Sea Island was a family-owned company, with iconic assets that were vital to the community both in terms of employment and economic development. Addressing the significant interests of the family ownership, management, membership, vendor community, customers and lenders in a sale process with

multiple competing private equity bidders required diplomacy, advocacy and some pretty creative legal work. We were able to effect a sale that preserved the jobs, honored all customer relationships, paid all vendors and preserved hundreds of millions of dollars in membership deposits.

What qualities should a lawyer possess to become a successful and effective leader?

Vision, authenticity, creativity, perseverance and integrity. Law firm leaders need to have an inspiring vision of what they are trying to accomplish and a plan for getting there. There are no leaders without followers so you need team building skills. That requires authenticity, relationship building, and the ability to inspire others. It also requires communication skills. You have to be able to communicate both good and bad news. There will be challenges—big and small—the best leaders are problem-solvers. You have to

think outside the box and stay the course. And, most of all, you need to do everything with integrity. It matters.

How do you see the field of law evolving in the next five to 10 years?

(1) Artificial intelligence is here and will likely revolutionize a lot of what lawyers have historically done for clients. But, there will always be a premium for a lawyer's judgment, innovation, advocacy, counseling and role as trusted adviser. Hopefully, the changes will be liberating and allow lawyers to focus on the most rewarding and valuable part of the job. (2) As the rate of change in our market accelerates, lawyers and law firms will need to constantly reinvent themselves and their businesses to adapt. (3) Three years post-pandemic, it appears that a hybrid work model is here to stay, so how we train new lawyers, build teams and inculcate our culture will be different.